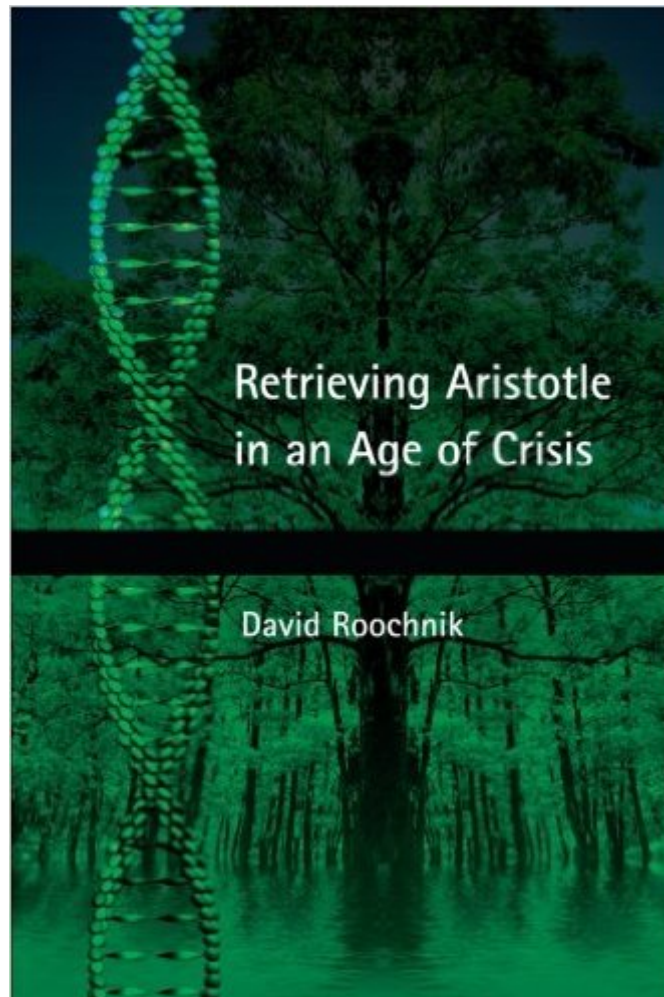


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Retrieving Aristotle In An Age Of Crisis (SUNY Series In Ancient Greek Philosophy)



Synopsis

An urgent, contemporary defense of Aristotle
In 1935 Edmund Husserl delivered his now famous lecture "Philosophy and the Crisis of European Humanity," in which he argued that the "misguided rationalism" of modern Western science, dominated by the model of mathematical physics, can tell us nothing about the "meaning" of our lives. Today Husserl's conviction that the West faces a crisis is no longer an abstraction. With the ever-present threat of nuclear explosion, the degradation of the oceans, and the possibility that climate change will wreak havoc on civilization itself, people from all walks of life are wondering what has gone so terribly wrong and what remedies might be available. In *Retrieving Aristotle in an Age of Crisis*, David Roochnik makes a lucid and powerful case that Aristotle offers a philosophical resource that even today can be of significant therapeutic value. Unlike the scientific revolutionaries of the seventeenth century, he insisted that both ordinary language and sense-perception play essential roles in the acquisition of knowledge. Centuries before Husserl, Aristotle was a phenomenologist who demanded that a successful theory remain faithful to human experience. His philosophy can thus provide precisely what modern European rationalism now so painfully lacks: an understanding and appreciation of the world in which human beings actually make their homes. Roochnik's thorough development of the proto-phenomenological character of Aristotle's work is by far the most detailed I know of, and this enables him to mount a defense of Aristotle's relevance today that is as strong as I have read. Moreover, the polemical, passionate, and personal style is a welcome change from the dryness of too much Aristotle scholarship. — Drew A. Hyland, author of *Plato and the Question of Beauty*

Book Information

Series: SUNY Series in Ancient Greek Philosophy

Paperback: 258 pages

Publisher: State University of New York Press (January 1, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1438445180

ISBN-13: 978-1438445182

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.6 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars — See all reviews (3 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,168,003 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #436 in Books > Politics &

Customer Reviews

Our state of environmental and cultural crisis, Roochnik argues, have come about from an unbalanced philosophy. The Enlightenment began with an objection to Aristotle's phenomenological method of knowledge, but these days we are so well-schooled in the Enlightenment that we don't know what is being objected to. The West's most important philosopher has been reduced in the literate mind to common knowledge of his scientific errors, but he was writing about much more than modern science. Even if we want to maintain our mixed-up society's objections to the Philosopher, we still need to know what we are objecting to. Roochnik does not hesitate to interrupt his exposition to note obvious or famous objections to Aristotle's scientific teachings, and the reader will probably agree at times. But it is impossible to conclude that Aristotle should be dismissed, because we simultaneously discover that what he is wrong about is far less important than the long list of things he is right about. This book is excellent for a number of reasons. First, the author emphasizes that Aristotle's philosophy should not be hidden on dusty shelves behind imaginary clouds of classicism or mysticism, because although it was written 2500 years ago, it is actually quite practical and uses common sense that should be familiar to anyone today. By taking Aristotle off the shelf and bringing him down to earth, we can see the logic of his portrait of the heavens. Second, modern research on Aristotle is integrated quietly without getting in the way of the central task of explaining his philosophy. The result is a smooth and engaging read with plenty of concrete, practical examples. Finally, the author gives us suggestions of why Aristotle might be important today at appropriate times, but not in the midst of the explanations. This is as well-written an introduction as anyone might hope to produce in 2013 and I am happy to recommend it to others.

David Roochnik's *Retrieving Aristotle* is a thoroughly thought-provoking and humane work. Over the course of the book, Roochnik masterfully ties together the major points of Aristotle's physics, metaphysics, ethics, and political science in concise, conversational language and, in doing so, makes a compelling argument for serious reflection upon the Aristotelian theory of the cosmos. While going through his task, Roochnik is not afraid to answer the obvious, modern points of criticism one might have against Aristotle: namely, heliocentrism, natural selection, and gender equality. In the main, Roochnik is successful in answering these criticisms by discussing them head one. The best part of Roochnik's book, however, is that he lets Aristotle speak for himself: Roochnik

raises fantastic questions, often serious objections, to Aristotle's thought and dives back to the text for an answer. While I have had no small amount of experience reading Aristotle, I believe this book would be a fantastic introduction for anyone who is curious about Aristotle's thought. This is the case because Roochnik offers both a broad overview and great insight into some of Aristotle's most puzzling passages, while restraining himself from becoming pedantic. In addition, the serious scholar might enjoy Roochnik's overall moral argument, which is derived from the following verse from Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia*: "Do not confuse progress with perfectibility." To conclude, whether you are a fan or a critic of Aristotle, this book is a good one, primarily because it provokes serious thought.

Arrived as expected. Thank you.

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